

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3, 5-7, 10-11, 13-16, 18-21, 23, 26, and 29-34 are currently pending, Claims 1-3, 5-6, 10-11, 13-16, 18-20, 23, 29, 31, and 32 having been amended, Claims 33 and 34 having been added, and Claims 9 and 22 having been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. The changes and additions to the claims do not add new matter and are supported by the originally filed specification, for example, on original Claims 1 and 9, page 24, lines 8-11; page 32, line 18 to page 33, line 10; page 34, line 5 to page 36, line 10; page 41, line 5-14; and Fig. 12.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-3, 5-7, 11, 13-16, 18-21, 26, and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0101608 to Whitmarsh, U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2001/0040692 to Matsueda et al. (hereinafter, "Matsueda"), U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2001/0046065 to Furukawa et al. (hereinafter, "Furukawa"), and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0026936 to Ouchi et al. (hereinafter, "Ouchi"); Claims 9, 10, 22, 23, and 30-32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Whitmarsh, Matsueda, Furukawa, Ouchi, and Japanese Application Publication No. 2001-209503 to Shima; and Claims 12 and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Whitmarsh, Matsueda, Furukawa, Ouchi, and U.S. Application Publication No. 2002/0032761 to Aoyagi et al. (hereinafter, "Aoyagi").

With respect to the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), Applicants respectfully submit that the present amendment to Claim 1 overcomes this ground of rejection. Amended Claim 1 recites, *inter alia*,

a storage part configured to store information of functions of a plurality of image forming apparatuses, including the image forming apparatus and other image forming apparatuses connected to the image forming apparatus via a network, and information of destination addresses of the image forming apparatuses;

a printing part configured to perform print processing when receiving a print request and print data from a client terminal;

a determination part configured to determine whether any of the plurality of image forming apparatuses has a function included in the print request based on the information of functions stored in the storage part; and

a print request part configured to request the printing part of the image forming apparatus to print the print data when the image forming apparatus has the function included in the print request based on the determination by the determination part, and to request one or more of the other image forming apparatuses to print the print data when the one or more of the other image forming apparatuses have the function included in the print request based on the determination by the determination part.

Whitmarsh is directed to a system and method for accessing and using a commercial print service. Fig. 1 of Whitmarsh shows a system which includes a client computing device 12 configured to be selectively connectable via a computer network 20 to a remote print service 13, which is connected to a plurality of printers 18b-18d (see para. [0021]). The publisher 18 will fulfill a printing request by printing a printable file 22 according to the printing parameters 24 of one of the printers 18b-18d.

However, Whitmarsh does not describe that one of the printers 18b-18d stores information of functions of a plurality of printers 18b-18d, including itself, and performs the printing of a print request itself when it has a function included in the print request, and requests one or more of the other printers to print the print data when the one or more of the other printers have the function included in the print request.

Therefore, Applicants submit that Whitmarsh fails to disclose or suggest all of “a storage part configured to store information of functions of a plurality of image forming apparatuses, including the image forming apparatus and other image forming apparatuses

connected to the image forming apparatus via a network, and information of destination addresses of the image forming apparatuses; a printing part configured to perform print processing when receiving a print request and print data from a client terminal; a determination part configured to determine whether any of the plurality of image forming apparatuses has a function included in the print request based on the information of functions stored in the storage part; and a print request part configured to request the printing part of the image forming apparatus to print the print data when the image forming apparatus has the function included in the print request based on the determination by the determination part, and to request one or more of the other image forming apparatuses to print the print data when the one or more of the other image forming apparatuses have the function included in the print request based on the determination by the determination part,” as defined by amended Claim 1.

Additionally, Matsueda describes a system shown in Fig. 1 which includes a LAN-FAX device 101 and a printer server 105 connected to a plurality of printers 106. The LAN-FAX device 101 has its own printer 215 (see Fig. 2). Matsueda describes that if an error occurs in the printer 215 of the LAN-FAX device 101, then print data is transferred to the printer server 105 for printing on one of the printers 106 (see para. [0066]).

However, while Matsueda describes a fax/prINTER device 101 transferring a print job to another printer *when an error occurs*, Matsueda does not describe that the device 101 stores information of functions of itself and the plurality of printers 106, and performs the printing of a print request itself *when it has a function included in a print request*, and requests one or more of the other printers 106 having the function included in the print request to print the print data.

Also, Furukawa describes a printing system shown in Fig. 1 which includes a host computer 1, a multicast router 3, and printers A to H all connected via a network. The host

computer detects which network printers on the network are capable of printing the subject print data without any problems and sends the print data only to printers that meet the criteria (see para. [0049]-[0060]).

However, Furukawa does not describe that *any of the network printers A to H* stores information of functions of itself and the other printers A to H, and performs the printing of a print request itself when it has a function included in a print request, and requests one or more of the other printers A to H having the function included in the print request to print the print data.

Furthermore, Ouchi describes a printing system as shown in Fig. 1 in which computers 12 installed at a home or office, a center server 16 installed in a service center 14, and printing systems 20 installed in laboratories 18 are connected via a network 22.

However, Ouchi does not describe that any of the printing systems 20 stores information of functions of itself and the other printing systems 20, and performs the printing of a print request itself when it has a function included in a print request, and requests one or more of the other printing systems 20 having the function included in the print request to print the print data.

Therefore, Applicants submit that any proper combination of Whitmarsh, Matsueda, Furukawa, and Ouchi fails to disclose or suggest all of “a storage part configured to store information of functions of a plurality of image forming apparatuses, including the image forming apparatus and other image forming apparatuses connected to the image forming apparatus via a network, and information of destination addresses of the image forming apparatuses; a printing part configured to perform print processing when receiving a print request and print data from a client terminal; a determination part configured to determine whether any of the plurality of image forming apparatuses has a function included in the print request based on the information of functions stored in the storage part; and a print request

part configured to request the printing part of the image forming apparatus to print the print data when the image forming apparatus has the function included in the print request based on the determination by the determination part, and to request one or more of the other image forming apparatuses to print the print data when the one or more of the other image forming apparatuses have the function included in the print request based on the determination by the determination part,” as defined by amended Claim 1.

Shima, and Aoyagi have been considered but fail to remedy the deficiencies of Whitmarsh, Matsueda, Furukawa, and Ouchi with regard to amended Claim 1.

In particular, Applicants note that Shima was relied upon in the Office Action to disclose the features of previous Claim 9, which recited “wherein the print request part requests a printing part of the image forming apparatus itself to print the print data.” (See Office Action, at page 13). However, Shima merely describes that there is a printer provided with a print server, and the printer specifies a loopback address to which print job data is specified (see para. [0012] and [0014] in the machine translation).

Shima does not describe anything about a printer that stores information of functions of itself and the other printers, and performs the printing of a print request itself when it has a function included in a print request, and requests one or more of the other printers having the function included in the print request to print the print data.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that amended Claim 1 (and all associated dependent claims) patentably distinguishes over Whitmarsh, Matsueda, Furukawa, Ouchi, Shima, and Aoyagi, either alone or in proper combination.

Amended independent Claims 14 and 29 recite features similar to those of amended Claim 1 discussed above. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that amended Claims 14 and 29 (and all associated dependent claims) patentably distinguish over Whitmarsh, Matsueda, Furukawa, Ouchi, Shima, and Aoyagi, either alone or in proper combination.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested. Furthermore, the examiner is kindly invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative at the phone number below to resolve any outstanding issues.

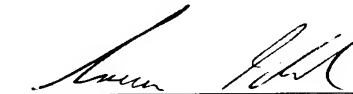
Respectfully submitted,

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